



## Coast Guard Flag Voice 33

### MANAGING WORKFORCE DIVERSITY II

Flag Voices originate from a variety of sources and discuss hot issues and those that should be. For example, the February *Reservist* magazine had a wonderful commentary on diversity by RADM Tom Barrett, Director, Reserve and Training. Since many probably didn't get a chance to see this, this Flag Voice reprints it. His essay not only addresses issues specific to the Reserve, but clearly puts diversity into its proper context, that is, why it's so important to the entire Coast Guard. RADM Barrett wrote:

"My topic this month is a challenging one for all of us - myself included. The topic is diversity and the need for us to recruit a more diverse Coast Guard. Diversity is not a new topic. In fact, one of the best discussions I have read on diversity was a dialogue between BM3 Keith Nevrinean and RADM Richard M. Larrabee in the June 1995 *Reservist*. It's worth rereading so I asked the editor to post it on our website for reference.

Diversity in a broad sense is simply the range of perspectives, backgrounds, identities, and skills each unique one of us brings to our tasks and our Coast Guard. It includes, as the Commandant's new Diversity Policy Statement indicates, both our differences and our similarities. Different backgrounds, talents and insights add capability and strength when people are bonded together by common purpose and common values. Our common values and purpose forge us into Team Coast Guard, just as they forge different Americans into communities, states and a republic that draws strength from both our individual differences and our common purpose. As the Seal of the United States proclaims, "E Pluribus Unum - From many come one." We have little difficulty acknowledging this broad meaning. However, the diversity issue I want to address here is narrower - the need to expand gender, ethnic and racial diversity in the Coast Guard.

As you know, getting to strength - recruiting, RELADs and retention - is our highest priority. And thanks to your efforts, we are beginning to make excellent recruiting progress. But when it comes to gender, ethnicity and race, recruiting is not as successful. There are some obvious reasons for this - Reservists are local residents and, as such, reflect local community demographics. Historically, the Coast Guard has not been a highly diverse organization and this affects the pool of people leaving active duty the Reserve can draw from. But I believe these are not the only or perhaps even the most important reasons the Reserve is not more diverse. I honestly believe we simply have not done enough to convey to prospective recruits we want to be a diverse Coast Guard...that deep down, we need, desire and welcome, truly welcome, Americans of every background to our Service.

If we think about the Coast Guard's heritage, it was built by diverse Americans, though not always in ways we are completely proud of today. Think about the Pea Island Lifesavers, Coast Guard heroes who

served mariners and our nation under segregated circumstances, who lacked not courage or skill, but only the recognition they deserved for extraordinary performance. Or Moses Jones and Louis Etheridge and other cooks, stewards and messmen who weren't considered "good enough" to serve in all ratings. But they served anyway; they served at sea, in war and peace, they served with courage and with pride, and they are an integral part of our Coast Guard's and our nation's success and heritage.

The simple fact is we need more men and women like them in our Coast Guard and Coast Guard Reserve today. We need the skills, the perspective, the seagoing heritage, the ties to local communities men and women from different ethnic and racial backgrounds can bring to the Coast Guard. We need to recruit and welcome them. Each of us needs to convey anyone with the determination, will, ability and desire to meet Coast Guard standards and serve is welcome in our Service. That's not just a job for recruiters, it's a job for every one of us and we need to get better at it.

To help in this effort, over the next several months we will deploy what we call the "Compass" program. This program will assist commands, recruiters, and individuals to bring Coast Guard opportunities to the attention of men and women from literally every compass point of American demographics. I encourage you to look for program announcements and support this outreach initiative."

The Commandant's new Diversity Policy Statement is on the USCG web site at: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-w/g-wt/g-wtl/cgdiv.htm>. Information on the "Compass" program will soon be on the Reserve website at: <http://www.uscg.mil/reserve>.

For "Reserve," we can substitute any other workforce, such as active duty, civilian or Auxiliary. I applaud the Office of Reserve for taking the lead with the Compass initiative. Similarly, we are evaluating other potential strategies to achieve success in attracting the future Coast Guard workforce. Your suggestions are most welcome. Send them to CDR Art Walsh, [awalsh@uscg.mil](mailto:awalsh@uscg.mil), leader of our Workforce 2015 Study.

Regards, FL Ames



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